

# Everybody is the Good One !

## Living History and Monuments at the Little Big Horn Battlefield Site

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**Abstract.** Two re-enactments are performed by Crow Indians and white re-enactors near and on the Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument, as the Custer Battlefield was renamed after President G.W. Bush signed a bill in 1991, which approved the change of the name and the building of an Indian Memorial close to the monument on the mass grave on the Last Stand Hill. Little Big Horn has become a symbol for much more than a small stream near which a mere skirmish by military standards took place in south-eastern Montana more than 130 years ago. The "battle" involved Custer, a man of marginal historical importance, and ironically it was crucial to the defeat of the resistant Sioux and their allies. In the aftermath of the battle, the US Army appropriated both the story and the battlefield, but their interpretation, once conventional, became hopelessly outmoded in the 1980s. Hence, the renaming of the battlefield and the building of the Indian Memorial attempted to convert it from a shrine to manifest destiny to a historical site where different people might construct multifaceted memory.

### Introduction

A thin line of blue cavalymen appears and disappears along the ridges of the hillocks and down the steep coulees around the Little Big Horn River, Montana, in Crow country. It is hot and the American flag hangs limply from its pole, yet within minutes all hell will break loose. Sioux<sup>1</sup>, Cheyenne and some Arapaho will ride at breakneck speed and "general" Custer's soldiers will be massacred once more, this time in front of paying public.

Indeed, there are two re-enactments performed by Crow Indians and white re-enactors near and on the Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument, as the Custer Battlefield was renamed after President G.W. Bush signed a bill in 1991, which approved the change of the name and the building of an Indian Memorial close to the monument on the mass grave on the Last Stand Hill, with the names of the 7th Cavalry soldiers, the Indian scouts (namely, three Arikara) and civilians killed in the battle.

Little Big Horn had become a symbol for much more than a small stream near which a mere skirmish by military standards took place in south-eastern Montana more than 130 years ago. The "battle" involved Custer, a man of marginal historical importance, and ironically it was crucial to the defeat of the resistant Sioux and their allies. On a grand scale, however, the Great Sioux War itself played a small part in a larger drama, the demise of bison ecology, which had flourished for ninety centuries, and that, with the introduction of the European horse - crucial to the demise of that ecology - gave birth to the 80-year-old Plains Indians' culture, which came to an end

within twenty-five years after the battle.

In the aftermath of the battle, the US Army appropriated both the story and the battlefield, but their interpretation, once conventional, became hopelessly outmoded in the 1980s. Hence, the renaming of the battlefield and the building of the Indian Memorial attempted to convert it from a shrine to manifest destiny to a historical site where different people might construct multifaceted memory (Rankin 1994).

### Replica Warriors Fight Again

In the USA re-enactments are very popular, because they allow people blind to history books and museums to participate, more or less bodily, in history (Agnew 2004). "Many battle participants spend large sums on equipment and uniforms, wax fanatical over details of dress down to the content of their pockets, and designate "historians" to research battles and troop movements" (Lowenthal 1985:295). Re-enactors have been dubbed, rather snobbishly, "replica people" or "human artefacts" (Marten 1981 Plimoth Plantation, letter to the Author, in Lowenthal 1985:295), as well as fanatical "button-counters" (Clark 1980:49 in *ibidem*). "Like restorers, re-enactors start with known elements and fill in the gaps with the typical, the probable or the invented," Lowenthal (*ibidem*) goes on, and "often slant the past for nationalist aims." Re-enactors, these historians from below, however, rely on a long, aristocratic tradition, which goes back, at least, to Elizabeth I's times in Britain and Emperor Maximilian I's on the Continent.

Both Crow re-enactments are not very realistic on several accounts: first, they

are more in the spirit of medieval morality plays. Both re-enactments, the one performed near Hardin, whose script was written by old Joe Medicine Crow, tribal historian and anthropologist, and that in Garryowen<sup>2</sup>, directed by Medicine Crow's grandsons, the Real Bird brothers, portray a highly idealized pre-history of the battle, from the Eden-like aboriginal life and heroic warfare to the encounter with Lewis and Clark and the fur trade. They are, in the end, a highly idealized history of the conquest of the West, but tuned in to the idea of the Indian "contribution" to American civilization. In fact, both are preceded by the US anthem, and the American flag snatched by the "hostiles" from the soldiers' hands at the end, is dealt with great respect. The feeling matches with that of the many US Army veterans among the public and the performers as well as the homage to the first Indian soldier woman killed during the second Iraqi war inside the Battlefield museum.

Second, the cavalymen belong to re-enactment groups such as the Michigan Cavalry Brigade, performing the doomed 7th Cavalry, and some come from very far away, such as Hardin's Custer from Vancouver, Canada and Di Rudio from Turin, Italy, or Garryowen's Captain Keogh, from New York. These people are real "button-counters" and, as it often happens with hyperreal replicas (Eco 1977), they are in better shape and more elegant than the originals, the poor working class and peasant immigrants from all over Europe, who made up 367 out of 839 men, that is almost half of the 7th troopers (who hardly knew how to ride and shoot), after a difficult campaign. The Seventh Cavalry soldiers who were born outside the USA,



Little Big. Horn Battlefield Site. Scenes from the Crow Reenactment  
Credit: Sandra Busatta, Montana, USA 2007.

including two born "at sea" are: 128 in Ireland, 125 in Germany, 53 in England, Switzerland 53, Canada 15, France 8, Italy 7, Denmark 6, Poland, Hungary, Norway and Sweden 2, Russia, Spain and Greece 1. Among the 472 American-born soldiers, many came from industrial states such as New York (101 men), Pennsylvania (80) and Massachusetts (45), and other northeastern states.

Third, as it also often happens with living history, the past is sanitized: in fact, not only dirt, squalor, stench and din are conspicuously absent, but since the audience is not made of the re-enactors themselves and their relatives and friends, but by paying public, any hints on the real horror of the battle and, above all, the mutilations, slaying of the wounded and pillaging of the soldiers' corpses are removed. Partial amnesia is necessary to ongoing life, and the general theme of both reenactments is the "healing" of the old wounds between red and white Americans. It is a vacation from the 21st century into a retroactive utopia, whose closest ancestors are the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and its imitators.

Fourth, the "hostile" Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho are played by the Crows, their historical enemies and scouts for Custer. The Crows were protecting their land, and succeeded in it, by allying themselves with the US Army, as well as, with the miners and the railway people.

Many details suggest the hard fact that we are among the Crows, but I will single out the most visible: the typical Crow tipis, with four poles as a foundation for the rest of the poles, in contrast to the three-pole tipis of the Sioux and the Cheyenne (Lowie 1983:88), stand at the margin of the re-enactment field to give the idea of the "hostile" camp. Actually, they stand where Sitting Bull's Hunkpapas were encamped. Hence, it cannot be a surprise that the Crows are not serious in playing the frustrated, end-of-the-trail "hostile" diehards, for whom the battle was also a Last Stand. The fact that they are not very credible "hostiles" is shown not only by the evident amusement of the Crow impersonators, but and above all by their clothes or lack of them. While the cavalrymen are obsessed by the authenticity of the details, the Indians' scant clothes and ornaments are very "primitive", like those of the 1950s' Hollywood extras, and not at all either reproducing 19th century originals or donning the clothes the Crows currently use for powwows and parades. Indeed, the sources are very clear about that: the warriors took their nice time to dress themselves for war even though they were attacked by surprise. The Lakota Sioux Iron Hawk remembers Major Reno's attack: "I had only bow and arrows. I got dressed for war as quickly as I could, but it took me a long time to

put an eagle feather on my head ! I painted my face a dark red. About the time I got through dressing for the war the Reno troop was through fighting so I did not get to fight any. I braided my feather through my hair. I started downstream toward where Custer was going" (DeMallie 1984:190, see also, for example, a Cheyenne warrior, Wooden Leg in Marquis [1931] 1970:196). Wooden Leg clearly affirms (in Marquis [1931] 1970:214) that no Cheyenne fought naked in this battle. All the Sioux and Cheyenne put on their best war dresses, but for a dozen of Sioux with special medicine paintings. As a matter of fact, the warrior was his dress, feathers and charms even more than his weapons; it was unthinkable that a warrior went to battle "naked", that is without his charms and the clothes which proclaimed his rank to the enemy.

On the other hand, since the costumes the Crows proudly display at the parades and powwows, the so-called "regalia", are a necessary ingredient of their ethnic-tribal identity, they cannot use them to play tribal adversaries, they still harbour a grudge against, in front of a paying public. Hence, the reason why the "soldiers" are a little "overdressed" and the Indians are a lot "under-dressed" and carnival-like is explained by non-verbal messages, expressed by the dressing code of the re-enactors, which counterpoints with the "healing" theme.

### The Battle Between Remembering and Forgetting

Cheyenne politician Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Democratic House Representative for Colorado and one of the sponsors of the bill to build an Indian Memorial, in 1990 asserted: "This is no way meant to take away from the battlefield as it is now or to denigrate the soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry. But the "other side" has never been acknowledged there. I think it is time" (in Reece 2005:40). The monument to the Seventh Cavalry, which was built on the soldiers' mass grave in 1881 cost \$ 500. Although the Arikara scouts' names are carved here, they also got their monument in their reservation at Fort Berthold, North Dakota. No Crow scout died in the battle, and one of the civilians, whose name is carved on the monument, Canadian reporter Mark Kellogg is considered the first Associated Press correspondent to die in the line of duty. Near it there is the



Little Big Horn Battlefield Site. Scenes from the Crow Reenactment

Credit: Sandra Busatta, Montana, USA 2007.

horses' mass grave and on Reno's Bluff there is the Troops and Pack Train Battlefield Monument. The new Indian Memorial, dedicated in 2003 cost about \$ 2.5 million; it is not a grave and should honour all the Indian participants to the battle, allies and enemies alike, Custer's scouts<sup>3</sup> and "hostile" Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho. No wonder that it took ten years to the commissioners of the project to reach a compromise and that the panels which are mounted now are still not permanent, because of deep tribal grudges, although the theme of the Indian Memorial is Peace Through Unity. The Arikara, however, got their reward, because the shape of the memorial looks like a typical earth lodge.

Gerald Baker, a Mandan-Hidatsa and the monument's superintendent, says that, except for the Civil War sites, this is the most difficult site in the national-park system to interpret. "We are not in the position to say who is good or bad. We just try to say what happened" (Fish 1996:1). Scholars have wondered whether we can "say what happened", as Baker argues optimistically. As

Lowenthal (1985:xvii) puts it, "the Past is a foreign country whose features are shaped by today's predilections, its strangeness domesticated by our own preservation of its vestiges. Now a foreign country with a blooming tourist trade, the past has undergone the usual consequences of popularity. The more it is appreciated for its own sake, the less real and relevant it becomes. No longer revered or feared, the past is swallowed up by the ever-expanding present."

Crow tribal guide Georgette Hogan thinks that Americans are fascinated by the battlefield because it is a strong representation of the clash of cultures (Fish 1996:2). The use of Huntington's (1993) fortunate concept is a typical example of Lowenthal's above-quoted idea that the past is transformed to suit present needs. It was not a clash of cultures (and even less of civilizations<sup>4</sup>, as Huntington's title actually reads), but a clash of rival expansionist peoples, where the weaker invaders, the Sioux and their allies, won the battle and lost the war against the invading Americans and their Indian allies.

"The opportunity to kill Sioux with the assistance of the US military was really inviting," remarks Tim McCleary, former Battlefield employee and teacher at the Little Big Horn College (Perrottet 2005:4). "The Sioux and Cheyenne were migrating onto our land from the east and the Arapaho from the south. Shall we say, they were passing through. They were visitors in the area," Crow historian Marvin Dawes points out, in turn (Perrottet 2005:4). The Crow veterans of all wars are honoured at the Apsaaloke<sup>5</sup> (Crow) Veterans Park in the reservation, where the monument to the Mystic Warrior tells how the Lakota (Sioux), Cheyenne and Arapaho "coveted the land of the Apsaaloke and their women and their children" (photo Busatta 2007) and how the Crows resisted to their repeated attacks for decades. Indeed, the Crows were enraged at the red-granite stone markers placed in 1991 to mark the spots where Sioux and Cheyenne warriors died, counterparts of the white marble markers erected for the soldiers and the Indian scouts in 1890. The inscription said that each fallen warrior "Died here on June 26, 1876 while defending his homeland and the (Sioux/Cheyenne) way of life", like that of the Sans Arc Sioux Long Road, near the Troops and Pack Train Monument, and which is the only one with offers from Lakota Sioux nationalists who keep on "coveting the land of the Apsaaloke (Crow)". The Crows protested so vociferously that the battle was actually fought on the Crow's homeland, that most inscriptions were changed into "Died on June 26, 1876 while defending the (Sioux/Cheyenne) way of life" !!! Near the red marker of a Cheyenne warrior the three white markers of the three Arikara scouts were transported, who had actually died in an area which is outside the Battlefield site, who is also a military cemetery as sacred as that of Arlington, Washington DC. The Arikara white marker inscriptions say that the "died while defending the Arikara way of life": while this inscription may puzzle those that know that the Arikara way of life, albeit mostly agricultural was more similar to that of the Cheyenne than to that of the white soldiers, in truth it was based on different long term choices, as we will see later speaking of Crow chief Plenty Coups' strategic choice. Halbwachs ([1941] 1992:235) argued that memory imprints its effects on the topography and that each group cuts up a place in order to compose a fixed frame-





Little Big Horn Battlefield Site. Scenes from the Crow Reenactment  
Credit: Sandra Busatta, Montana, USA 2007.

work within which to enclose and retrieve its remembrance. This connection between the landscape of the Battlefield and memory took some time to sink in the Euro-Americans' awareness: for decades only some private white visitor and the Crows visited the mass grave surrounded by wooden stakes. In 1882 Custer's youngest Crow scout, Curly was photographed with and by F. Jay Haynes standing close to the marble monument which substituted the cordwood monument in 1881. Howard Boggess, who directs Hardin's Big Horn County Historical Museum and whose great-grandmother was Woman Who Walked into the Clouds, Curly's sister, says that Curly was shocked by the battle: "My mother said that every morning Curly would get up early and ride the battlefield and sing chants for the people who died," his white and Arikara friends, since no Crow had died in that battle.

It was only in the semi-centennial year 1926, however, that the place became a real Memorial, after a three-day long commemoration which included an exchange of gifts (an American flag and a blanket) between two veterans of the battle, general Godfrey on behalf of the US Army and the Lakota White Bull on behalf of the Indians (Reece 2005:13). For the Indians the ceremony represented their attempt to show their patriotism on

the wake of the First World War and the citizenship granted in 1924, and to stress their desire for inclusion into American society. For the whites the battle was a moral victory for the nation, in which Custer and the 7th sacrificed themselves to open the West to civilization. As Linenthal (1983:267) puts it, "for about a hundred years, rituals celebrated at the battlefield expressed many Americans' persistent attraction to the heroic actions of [American] warriors and the redemptive experience of war." It is obvious that Cheyenne House Representative Ben Nighthorse Campbell "forgot" the real presence of the soldiers' bones inside the mass grave when, in 1990, he addressed the importance of American Indian recognition at the battlefield: "It is the only place I know where the monument has been built to the losers" (in Reece 2005:36). Actually, the renaming of the battlefield and the building of the Indian Memorial meant acts of ownership; in this case, after the American Indian Movement's political actions and the desecration of the soldiers' grave, the Lakota-Sioux and the Cheyenne adopted the US Army's heroic rhetoric and their stereotyped, politically correct Hollywood image to obscure their past invasion of the land of the Apsaloke. In 1882 Renan (1990:11 in Misztal 2003:17), writing on nationalism, remar-

ked that the essence of a nation is made of not only by the things its members have in common, but also by what they have forgotten. Anderson (1983), moreover, argues that selective forgetting is one of the most important mechanisms of nationalism. Russell Means and the other AIM militants who demonstrated in 1972 and 1976, and even publicly desecrated the grave in 1988 (feigning ignorance of the existence of the bones under the monument !!), are a good example of this collective amnesia. In 1976, on the first centennial of the battle, Means snatched the mike at the podium, affirmed that "you continue to invade our territory and disrupt our families," declared himself upset over the Cavalry's invasion of Indian land back in 1876, and demanded a memorial for the Sioux and the Cheyenne (Means 1995:358). Means wrote about this episode in his autobiography *Where White Men Fear to Tread* (1995); the title is typical of Means' politics, because he paraphrases the title of E.M. Forster's novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), from early 18th century English poet Alexander Pope's sentence "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Means just forgot (more probably did not know) the part on the fools6!!! He had also forgotten one more thing: he had omitted facts and the aspects of history he did not like. Similar to the Serbians in Kosovo, Means conveniently forgot to mention that he was on Crow land.

Robert Utley, the famous historian and the official keynote speaker in 1976, made most of his rebuttal by pointing out that the year of the battle, 1876, the Sioux themselves had encroached onto Crow land. "[We] should dedicate ourselves to righting the wrongs of the past." Utley (2004:153) rebuked Means, and added: "But in reaching for that goal, let us not infuse the battlefield with a modern meaning untrue to the past." Yet, can we be "true" to the past? Lowenthal (1985) has shown that, notwithstanding historians' good faith, albeit naïve, in the possibility of being "true" to the past, we are faced with hoary documents regularly forged, old paintings imitated, relics contrived and so forth. "When a past we depend on for heritage and continuity turns out to be a complex of original and altered remains enlarged by subsequent thoughts and deeds, if not outright sham, we lose faith in our perceptions. Yet to see why and how we ourselves change the past helps to free us from myths that



Little Big Horn Battlefield Site. Scenes from the Crow Reenactment  
Credit: Sandra Busatta, Montana, USA 2007.

constrained previous perceptions" (Lowenthal 1985:411). He concludes: "The past remains integral to us all. Individually and collectively it is assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present" (Lowenthal 1985:412).

Hence, the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho who tried to bully the Crow and Arikara off the Indian Monument dedicated in 2003 are crediting themselves with a self-serving public image of tough insurgents and resistance fighters and their adversaries with that of traitors of the red race. But the Crows know better: "They say, 'Oh those Crows there were with Custer!' But lots of other tribes were scouts. The Cheyenne were scouts for the Nez Perce campaign" (in Fish 1996:1). As a matter of fact, less than one year after the battle of Little Big Horn, since April 1877, many former "hostile" veterans had been eager to join the US Army: Two Moons and the Fort Keogh Cheyenne scouted for General Miles against Chief Joseph, the Nez Perce (Stands in Timber and Liberty [1967]1995:210-230). Little Wolf and his men, protagonists of the famous flight together with Dull Knife and of the romantic movie *Cheyenne Autumn* by John Ford, served as scouts for general Miles against their former Sioux allies

(Hoig 1989:94, Howard [1965] 1988:268-269). The Cheyenne, who served the US Army until 1896, even during and after the Ghost Dance's crisis, were rewarded with the Lame Deer reservation, cut off the Crow reservation (the Crow still harbour a grudge against it) as well as the former Great Sioux Reservation. As to the very few Sioux diehards, several also served for Miles against the Nez Perce, among them many of Crazy Horse's Oglala band (Ambrose [1975] 1978:515). Even Crazy Horse himself said that "if the white men wished it, he would fight until there were no Nez Perce left" (Clark [1976]1988:29).

### The Chickadee's Politics

The choice of the Crows to be staunch allies of the Americans (and by extension that same choice made by several other tribes<sup>7</sup>) has been examined with great interest, and more brilliant results, beyond the rather stuffy rooms of the Departments of Ethnohistory and Indian Studies. In particular, Anglo-American philosopher Jonathan Lear (2006) singled out the last great hereditary chief of the Crows, Plenty Coups, for his analysis of the concept of radical hope, that peculiar kind of courage needed to face cultural devastation and the demise of a way

of life. Plenty Coups participated with General Crook in the battle of the Rosebud in June 1876, just before the battle of the Little Big Horn, and the Crows were instrumental to the success, albeit inconclusive, of the US Army. When Plenty Coups was a child, he had two dreams (Linderman [1974] 1976:57-71). The first helped him to go on after the death of his beloved brother, killed by the Sioux, the second showed him an apocalyptic vision of the future without the buffalo, substituted by cattle, and a forest where only one tree was left standing by the winds. In it there was the home of the chickadee, a kind of sparrow (genus *Perithestes* or *Parus*), and this tree represented the Crow nation.

The chickadee-person is curious, resourceful and flexible, listens to others and learns from them, according to Indian animal stories. Incorporating these attributes allowed Plenty Coups and the Crows to be flexible in creating new definitions of courage and the good life which would suit any eventuality. "On the strength of his dream, which he shared with the tribe, Plenty Coups led the Crows in abandoning their nomadic, hunting way of life and settling down as farmers. The key to this achievement was that he could present this project not as a surrender but as an attempt to maintain the collective life of the Crows through the changes which the adaptive wisdom of the chickadee dictated," writes Canadian sociologist Charles Taylor in his review of Lear's book (2007:8).

Can Plenty Coups' policy of cooperation with the USA be dubbed "collaboration", with its negative overtones acquired during the Second World War? While this concept would be anachronistic if applied retroactively to the Crows, they had so many Indian enemies that they could not have survived without a powerful ally. Their feelings were expressed at the meeting between the Shoshoni (who had also made the same choice to survive) and the Crows to help General Crook planning the 1876 campaign. The chief Old Crow asserted: "These are our lands by inheritance. The Great Spirit gave them to our fathers but the Sioux stole them from us. They have stolen our horses. They have murdered our squaws and our children. What white man has done these things to us? The face of the pale faces has ever been red to the Crows. We want back our lands The Sioux have trampled upon our hearts. We shall spit upon their scalps Where the white war-





Monument on the soldiers's mass grave.  
Credit: Sandra Busatta, Montana, USA 2007.



Little Big Horn Battlefield Site. Scenes from the Crow Reenactment  
Credit: Sandra Busatta, Montana, USA 2007.

rior goes, there shall we be also. It is good" (Trenholm and Cole 1981:248). Lear attributes to Plenty Coups and the Crows the Aristotelian definition of courage, far from military rashness, a courage which requires lucidity and, in perspective, the abandonment of everything made sense and constituted the core of Crow identity. In fact, as Lowie (1983:215), quoted by Lear (p. 12), said: "War was not a concern of a class nor even of the male sex, but of the whole population, from cradle to grave. and since success in life is so largely matter of martial glory, war exploits became the chief content of prayer." This martial ideology was shared by all the Plains Indians, but the Crows could foresee its demise and prepare for the new times.

While Lear concentrates mostly on the Crows, he also contrasts their actions with the response of the Sioux under Sitting Bull. The Sioux developed an idea of messianic saviour who would destroy the whites and allow the Sioux to return to their predatory way of life. By adopting this point of view (but chiefs such as Red Cloud and Spotted Tail did not) the Sioux turned away from the future in favour of a dream of the past that could never return. Realistically, Plenty Coups "proposed a policy of cooperation, but of wary and vigilant cooperation. He advocated a strategic alliance with the US in wars against rival tribes, but he knew that the government could never be wholly trusted. He encouraged young tribe members to attend universities, [and] led

several delegations of tribal attorneys to Washington, DC, in the beginning of the twentieth century, and he successfully lobbied to retain control over large territories" (Taylor 2007:10-11).

"I would rather hunt buffalo for a living, but we cannot - Plenty Coups once explained humorously- So I have opened a grocery store" (Holz 2000:1). And it was a very popular meeting place for the local people and the labourers who constructed irrigation canals on the reservation in the 1890s. Of the Indian protagonists of the 1876 campaign, Bloody Knife<sup>8</sup>, the Arikara-Sioux head of the scouts for the Seventh Cavalry, former Sioux slave and Custer's friend rests in peace under a glorious monument in his reservation at Fort Berthold. On the other hand, beyond today's rhetoric of mostly urban militants, Crazy Horse was a victim of a Sioux plot - a common way of getting rid of political foes among the Sioux - and his body was hidden to avoid desecration from his many Indian enemies. Sitting Bull was also killed by his tribal foes among the various Hunkpapa factions, his family forced to flee among the Oglala and find shelter there to this day, and his grave lies in a squalid corner of Fort Yates reservation, disrespectfully covered with graffiti.

As a sociologist and a philosopher, Taylor is interested in Lear's philosophically sophisticated book because it is "a story of courage and moral imagination" which, by using the example of the Crows, "offers the kind of insights that would-be builders of "new world order"

desperately need" (Taylor 2007:12). It should be clear, however, Taylor (ibidem) warns, running an eye over the most touchy contemporary issues "that transitions to democracy only succeed (and even then often slowly) when they draw on creative developments of already existing cultural resources," as the contrast between the Crows and the Sioux exemplify.

### Conclusion

The lack of separation between memory and imagination, history and fiction had been known since the Greeks, whose Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, was the mother of both history and poetry (Misztal 2003:115). In today's global, ethnically and culturally pluralistic societies some particularistic memories are felt as a dangerous obstacle to the democratic cooperation between groups. Within the heritage industry, where monuments replace the real sites of memory, these places become examples of contested memories (Misztal 2003). Battlefields often serve as ceremonial centres as well as civic spaces where Americans of various ideological persuasion come to compete for the ownership of powerful national stories, and to argue about the nature of heroism, the meaning of war, the efficacy of national sacrifice, and the significance of preserving the patriotic landscape of the nation (Linenthal 2001). Heroic dead are essential to the collective heritage (Lowenthal 1996). Memory often functions as myth, whose historical truth is irrelevant; it is also the

site of the articulations of public and private interests as well as of contradictory identities. Monuments who seek to honour collective memory can be forgetful of some elements of the past (Misztal 2003). Hence, although one of the underlying themes at the Battlefield site is the clash of cultures, that of the Indian diehards and that of the manifest destiny's heralds, the other leitmotif is that of healing between former enemies (Healing Through Unity) and national unity in the face of new enemies. This is why Pfc Lori Piestewa<sup>9</sup>, a Hopi and the first American Indian servicewoman killed in action in Iraq in 2003, is honoured here, as a current symbol of the American Indian contribution to the US military, to the USA and its global war on terror and for democracy. Thus, although sacralizing memory usually sanitizes it, the Little Big Horn Battlefield site is a valuable place which enhances our understanding of both popular, pluralistic American culture and the main characteristic of the past, that is change.

#### Notes

1. The Sioux (/su/) are a Native American and First Nations people. The term can refer to any ethnic group within the Great Sioux Nation or any of the nation's many dialects. The Sioux comprise three major divisions based on dialect and subculture: the Santee or Dakota, the Yankton-Yanktonai or Nakota, and the Lakota. The Lakota (also Lakhota, Teton, Tetonwon) form one of a group of seven tribes (the so-called Great Sioux Nation) and are the westernmost of the three Sioux groups, occupying lands in both North and South Dakota. The seven branches or "sub-tribes" of the Lakota are Brulé, Oglala, Sans Arcs, Hunkpapa, Miniconjou, Sicasapa and Two Kettles. In the old texts and also today when referring to the 19th century wars Sioux is usually used. Hence, I am going to follow this classic usage.
2. The United States 7th Cavalry Regiment's official nickname is "Garryowen", which alludes to the traditional 18th century Irish drinking song Garryowen that was adopted as its march tune in 1867. The word garryowen is derived from Irish, the proper name Oein and the word for garden garrai - thus "Owen's Garden". The term refers to an area of the town of Limerick, Ireland. Garryowen is also the name of a village inside the Crow reservation.
3. The scouts with the Seventh Cavalry were 39 Arikara, 6 Crow, 5 Dakota Sioux (Santee), 2 Blackfeet and 1 Teton Sioux; only the Crow and the Arikara are named in the Indian Memorial, but the names of all of them appear inside the museum.
4. Although "culture" and "civilization" are usually use interchangeably, their meaning is actually very different: "culture" derives from the Latin colere, to cultivate, and was used for centuries meaning cultivate themselves, that is becoming educated. Its present use comes from

19th-century American anthropology, but scholars are still struggling with its definitions. "Civilization" comes from the Latin civis and civitas, that is citizen and city, and are obviously referred to urban contexts, or to say it in other words to "cultures at the urban stage". French anthropology, typically, uses "civilization".

5. The name of the tribe, Apsáalooke [ʔpsaʔloʔke], had been mistranslated by early interpreters as "people of [the] crows," through the French gens des corbeaux, It actually meant "people [or children] of the large-beaked bird," a name given to them by their sister tribe, the Hidatsa. The bird, perhaps now extinct, was defined as a fork-tailed bird resembling the blue jay or magpie. Some identify it with the sparrow hawk.
6. "No Place so Sacred from such Fops is barr'd, Nor is Paul's Church more safe than Paul's Church-yard; Nay, fly to Altars; there they'll talk you dead; For Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread." [1711 Pope Essay on Criticism l. 625]. The sentence, which is often shortened as in Forster's title, means that Ignorant or inexperienced individuals get involved in situations that wiser persons would avoid. "Fools Rush In" a song written 1940 was made famous by Frank Sinatra and later by Elvis Presley (1972) and the line also appears a Bob Dylan's song.

7. Just to mention some tribes which allied themselves to this or that European power or to the USA: Pawnee, Arikara, Caddo and Wichita, Pima and Papago, Pueblo, Cree, Ojibwa, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Catawba, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Shoshone, Assiniboin, Flathead, Warm Spring Apache, Tonkawa, Abnaki.

8. Bloody Knife, and Arikara Indian scout who was killed at the Battle of Little Bighorn, was the favorite scout of General George Armstrong Custer and was at his side in the Yellowstone, Black Hills and Little Bighorn campaigns of 1873-1876. He was the son of a Hunkpapa Sioux father and an Arikara prisoner. He was considered a "mongrel" because of that, in particular by Gall, who Bloody Knife hated. To this day, Bloody Knife's people tell the story of his horse. During the pivotal summer of 1876, after the Battle of Little Bighorn, the buckskin horse belonging to the Arikara warrior found its way home, 500 miles distant, to Like-A-Fishhook Village near what is now Garrison, ND. The Arikara say the spirits of all the men, both warriors and soldiers, who fell in the battle, were embodied in the horse, which returned home to tell the story of their brave deeds.
9. Piestewa was a member of the army's 507th Army Maintenance Company, a support unit of clerks, repairmen and cooks. Her company became lost during the opening days of the war and ran into an ambush in Nasiriyah, in southern Iraq, on March 23, 2003.

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Near Little Bighorn River, Crow Indian Reservation, Big Horn County, Montana, U.S.  $45^{\circ}33'25''\text{N } 107^{\circ}25'44''\text{W}$  /  $45.56500^{\circ}\text{N } 107.42889^{\circ}\text{W}$  / 45.56500; -107.42889 (The Battle of Little BigHorn)Coordinates:  $45^{\circ}33'25''\text{N } 107^{\circ}25'44''\text{W}$  /  $45.56500^{\circ}\text{N } 107.42889^{\circ}\text{W}$  / 45.56500; -107.42889 (The Battle of Little BigHorn). The battle, and Custer's actions in particular, have been studied extensively by historians.[15] Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument honors those who fought on both sides. Contents. 1 Background. 1.1 Battlefield and surrounding areas. 1.2 1876 Sun Dance ceremony. 1.3 1876 U.S. military campaign. Little Big Horn Battlefield MT was merged with this page. Unofficial Page. Located In Hardin, Montana. It was a very hot day in June, and Custer was unaware of the ambush that would take place. I was fascinated by the site and tried to imagine how it would have felt when those Indians all rushed up from down near the river or creek that was there. there was no where to hide or take cover, so it was over fairly quick. Posts About Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Robby Height is with Michael Height at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. 20 February at 12:59 Hardin, MT, United States. Me and my boy walking American history. The Battle of the Little Bighorn has come to symbolize the clash of two vastly dissimilar cultures: the buffalo/horse culture of the northern plains tribes, and the highly industrial/agricultural based culture of the United States. This battle was not an isolated soldier versus warrior confrontation, but part of a much larger strategic campaign designed to force the capitulation of the nonreservation Lakota and Cheyenne. Reno's now shattered command recrossed the Little Bighorn River and struggled up steep bluffs to regroup atop high ground to the east of the valley fight. Mailing Address: Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument P.O. Box 39 Crow Agency, MT 59022-0039. Phone: (406) 638-3216.